Methane Hydrates Interagency R&D Conference

Demonstrating the power of working together

Renaissance Washington, DC Hotel
March 20-22, 2002

The widespread occurrence of natural methane hydrate is one of the most exciting scientific discoveries of the past two decades. Just as exciting is the unprecedented cooperation between federal agencies involved in hydrate research. The purpose of this conference is to present the results of and future plans for methane hydrate research by the participating federal agencies.

Attendees will:

- Learn about the key issues surrounding natural methane hydrates from those who are leading research, development, and demonstration efforts;
- Become informed about ongoing R&D efforts; and
- Exchange ideas with hydrate advocates throughout North America.

Hydrates Overview – Once thought to be only a laboratory curiosity, we now know that methane hydrate may hold more organic carbon (and more energy potential) than all the world's coal, oil, and natural gas combined. This unique combination of methane (the main component of natural gas) trapped inside ice crystals has been recorded virtually everywhere high pressures combine with relatively low temperatures; particularly in areas of Arctic permafrost and in ocean sediments at depths of 500 meters or more.

The issues surrounding methane hydrates are incredibly broad and complex. In addition to their potential as a huge future energy source, ongoing research is revealing that methane hydrates are a vast and dynamic component of the natural environment. New discoveries now being made could dramatically alter both the global balance of the world energy supply and our basic understanding of the way the Earth's crust, oceans, atmosphere, and climate interact.

Interagency Cooperation – The National Methane Hydrates Research and Development Act of 2000 sets forth a program of federally funded collaborative research that addresses the multifaceted issues and areas of research associated with methane hydrates. The program supports basic science and technological research and development utilizing the talent of federal, private, and academic organizations. This research is being coordinated by the Interagency Coordinating Committee (ICC) to ensure that the research is efficient and cooperative, that there is not duplication of work, and that no important questions are left unanswered. The committee is made up of members from the following agencies:

- U.S. DOE's Office of Fossil Energy and the National Energy Technology Laboratory (NETL)
- Naval Research Laboratory (NRL)
- Minerals Management Service (MMS)
- United States Geological Survey (USGS)
- National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA)
- National Science Foundation (NSF)

Conference Presentations

The conference will begin with an overview of methane hydrate issues. Topics will include an assessment of the scale at which hydrates occurs, the connections between hydrates, global climate change, the world's oceans and newly-discovered chemosynthetic lifeforms, and a review of international activities related to natural methane hydrate. The remainder of the conference will concentrate on each agency's research efforts by geographical region – Arctic, West Coast, East Coast, and Gulf of Mexico.

Who should attend

- Oil and gas exploration and production executives, technology developers, researchers, and service providers.
- Federal and state agency personnel involved in energy policy, energy-related research, or planning.
- Universities, associations, and other groups involved in methane hydrate research, development, and policy analysis.
- Anyone interested in the nation's long-term energy future, or the role natural hydrates play in global climate and ocean processes.